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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 001464

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ELA AND DRL/NESCA
NSC FOR KUMAR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: "APRIL 6" MOVEMENT CONSOLIDATES RANKS, LOOKS
TOWARD COMING ELECTIONS

REF: A. CAIRO 695
[1](#)B. CAIRO 591
[1](#)C. CAIRO 580
[1](#)D. CAIRO 468
[1](#)E. 08 CAIRO 2572
[1](#)F. 08 CAIRO 697

Classified By: Economic-Political Minister-Counselor
Donald A. Blome for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. KEY POINTS

-- (C) "April 6" movement leader Ahmed Saleh told us July 26 that the group has ejected Islamist and Nasserist members to try to preserve its secular, western orientation.

-- (C) Saleh urged U.S. pressure on the GOE for international monitors for the 2010 and 2011 elections. He is planning to travel to the U.S. with Ayman Nour in October to press for international monitors.

-- (C) According to Saleh, a U.S.-based Freedom House official recently received a letter from the Egyptian MFA criticizing the organization's association with Saleh.

-- (C) Meeting us for the first time July 28, "April 6" coordinator Ahmed Maher said the group is open to working with secular opposition parties on voter education and other activities.

[1](#)2. (C) Background: "April 6" is a small, youth-based movement which advocates replacing the current regime through a peaceful transition to democracy that would include a weak presidency and an empowered parliament and prime minister. The movement organized a largely successful strike in Cairo on April 6, 2008 through Facebook to protest price increases and political and economic conditions (ref F). Following the strike, the GOE has arrested and tortured "April 6" members, and has prevented the group from staging public demonstrations (ref E). End background.

Cleaning House: Islamists and Nasserists Out

[1](#)3. (C) Saleh told us July 26 that the group ejected 13 Islamist and Nasserist members the previous day in an attempt to consolidate its secular, western orientation. Saleh had told us previously that these members had tried to hijack "April 6," and turn it into a Islamist movement opposing the west and rejecting Egypt's peace treaty with Israel (refs A, D). Saleh said that following the ouster, "April 6" published a new "manifesto" on its Facebook page, reaffirming the group's interest in working with western countries and organizations. Saleh assessed that the movement would now be more internally "harmonious," but that the ousted members

would try to attack the group from the outside. He predicted that thousands of young Egyptians would join "April 6" now that the movement has resolved its internal issues.

"April 6" Looking Toward 2010 and 2011 Elections

¶4. (C) Saleh said "April 6" is now focusing on the 2010 parliamentary and 2011 presidential elections. He asked for U.S. pressure on the GOE to allow international monitors as the only way of ensuring free and fair elections and open campaigns. He asserted that the political opposition would only be able to operate freely under such conditions, as the GOE would otherwise use the Emergency Law to prevent campaigning. Saleh noted that he had made this point to USG, Congressional and NGO interlocutors during his June-July trip to the U.S. Saleh said he is also coordinating his actions with Saad Eddin Ibrahim.

¶5. (C) Saleh asserted that free and fair elections as part of a gradual non-violent transition to democracy would be the only way to address Egypt's acute economic and political problems. He said that "April 6" plans an internet voter education campaign to decrease voter apathy, and wants to stage street demonstrations to support this goal. However, he predicted the GOE would prevent such demonstrations. According to Saleh, "April 6" members are currently not planning to run for seats in the 2010 parliamentary elections, but he noted that this calculus could change if the elections were "more open." Saleh stressed that if movement members chose to run, they would do so as

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independents, not as opposition party candidates.

¶6. (C) "April 6" Coordinator Ahmed Maher told us July 28 that the group is open to working with secular opposition parties such as Al-Ghad, the Democratic Front and Anwar Esmat Sadat's nascent Reform and Development Party on voter education and other activities such as anti-corruption initiatives. Maher said he is working to establish an organizational structure for the group that would include a Cairo-based coordinating committee overseeing smaller chapters in each governorate. (Note: This was our first meeting with Maher who was arrested and tortured following the April 6, 2008 strike, and tries to keep a low profile. End note.)

New Coordination with Ayman Nour

¶7. (C) Saleh said he is working with former opposition presidential candidate Ayman Nour on a planned October 1-7 visit the U.S. to urge the USG to press for international election monitors. Saleh said that he, Nour and another opposition politician would travel together. Saleh told us he is working with U.S.-based Egyptians such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Dina Guirgis of Voices for a Democratic Egypt and Sherif Mansour of Freedom House to coordinate an Ayman Nour trip focused on monitors. He said Guirgis is the lead U.S.-based coordinator for the trip. According to Saleh, Saad Eddin Ibrahim travelled to Europe in mid-July to urge European officials to press for international monitors.

¶8. (C) Saleh told us that "April 6" would support Nour as a presidential candidate in 2011 if he were able to run. Saleh noted that he recently began discussions with Nour about future coordination with "April 6" to achieve democratic change. He described Nour as slightly "unbalanced from his time in jail," but voiced hope that Nour could be an agent of change in open 2011 presidential elections.

Saleh's U.S. Travel

19. (C) Saleh said that during his June-July travel to the U.S., a Washington-based Freedom House official told him that the Egyptian MFA had sent Freedom House a letter criticizing the organization's relationship with Saleh. According to Saleh, the Freedom House official said the letter criticized Saleh as "an illegitimate opportunist seeking asylum in the U.S." Saleh told us GOE customs searched him for 2 hours on July 20 at Cairo International Airport upon his return. He believed customs gave his papers to MOI State Security Investigative Services (SSIS) officers.
Tueller